

State News

COLORADO

Prairie-chicken flights planned in SE Colorado

Biologists with Western Eco-System Technology, Inc. (WEST, Inc.) are working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and four other state wildlife agencies to conduct low-elevation helicopter flights that will develop a range-wide, multi-state estimate of lesser prairie-chicken populations. The surveys are part of a collaborative effort by Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas to keep the lesser prairie-chicken off the federal Endangered Species List. "While Colorado has only a small portion of the lesser prairie-chicken range, we understand the key role that we play in assessing the bird's overall health," said Mike King, Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. "Our goal is to make sure that sufficient data exists to work with local partners and recover these birds. By working with private landowners and communities, we can recover the birds and try to prevent the need for a federal listing."

Local landowners in Baca, Prowers, Cheyenne and Kiowa counties are advised that low-elevation helicopter flights may occur between Sunday, April 1 and Saturday, April 7. "Helicopter flights have proven

an efficient means to survey large areas for this type of population estimate," said Brian Dreher, Senior Terrestrial Biologist for the southeast region of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. "The work should be quick and landowners shouldn't experience any disruption to their regular activities."

While Colorado's survey work is limited to small areas of the four counties, crews are also working to survey much of the entire state of Kansas and large portions of Oklahoma. Those states are home to the core populations of the lesser prairie-chicken. The lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) is a prairie grouse species that is found in the sandy, short grass, prairie regions of Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado. It is slightly smaller than its cousin, the greater prairie-chicken. Like sage-grouse, both species of prairie-chicken are known and popular among birders for their elaborate dancing and drumming behavior around breeding areas, commonly called leks. The bird is listed by the state of Colorado as a threatened species and is a candidate species for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. Landowners with questions about the birds or the flights can contact Travis Black, Area Wildlife Manager for Colorado Parks

and Wildlife in Lamar at 719-336-6600 or Brian Dreher, Senior Terrestrial Biologist for Colorado Parks and Wildlife in Colorado Springs at 719-227-5220. Additional information about lesser prairie-chickens can be found online at <http://wildlife.state.co.us/WildlifeSpecies/Profiles/Birds/Pages/LesserPrairieChicken.aspx>.

GEORGIA

Georgia DNR Accepting Public Comment on Grant to Increase Public Access

Expanding and enhancing public access to Wildlife Management areas is a priority for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division (WRD). A grant received by WRD will assist with this priority, but first the agency is seeking public comment for a required environmental assessment prior to the funds being awarded.

The grant is through the Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentive Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency. Using the existing Wildlife Management Area (WMA) program as a model, WRD's grant proposal will provide new public hunting and fishing opportunities through participating landowners.

"Our goal is to enroll an additional 15,000 WMA acres as well as add 1,000 to 1,200 acres of dove fields," says Alex Coley, assistant chief of